

Strengthening and Sustaining Municipal Children's Savings Accounts

Resources for Design and Implementation

The following resources have been collected to help cities to develop or strengthen a municipal Children's Savings Account (CSA) program. They include both guides and research focused exclusively on CSAs, as well as information about other programs or areas that can be connected to CSA planning and implementation. This not an exhaustive compilation but it can expand the frames of reference for CSA design and implementation. Many of the sites listed contain additional useful information beyond the specific resources given.

General

- The Institute for Assets and Social Policy (IASP) published a thorough literature [review](#) that includes references to much of the foundational research on CSAs and to recent publications on individual projects:
[http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/2017/CSA%20LEVERS%20FOR%20SUCCESS 2017.pdf](http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/2017/CSA%20LEVERS%20FOR%20SUCCESS%202017.pdf).
- Also from IASP is a [case study](#) of the formation and workings of the New England CSA Consortium that could inform newer affiliations around CSAs:
<http://iasp.brandeis.edu/pdfs/2017/CULTIVATING%20CSAs%20chpt%206-7.pdf>.
- Prosperity Now published a [blog](#) about the New England CSA Consortium. There is a webinar as well: <https://prosperitynow.org/blog/expanding-csas-through-regional-collaboration>. NLC cities Boston and Chelsea are part of this group that is now being replicated by the Midwest CSA Initiative, led by the Heartland Alliance, to serve IN, OH, MN, WI, MI, and IL.

CSA Fundamentals

These are a few "go to" sites for fundamentals about CSAs and for frequent updates on new programs, webinars, tools, and reports. In addition to their own work, most of these sites also republish or link to news and research activity around the country.

- The NLC's landing page for CSA work is: <http://www.nlc.org/city-led-childrens-savings-account-csa>.
- Prosperity Now's CSA pages offer a range of tools, project blogs and a directory of active projects: <https://prosperitynow.org/issues/childrens-savings>. For projects in early conceptual stages, the CSA Toolkit is especially useful: <https://prosperitynow.org/resources/investing-dreams-blueprint-designing-childrens-savings-account-programs>.

- The Center on Assets, Education and Inclusion, which has moved to the University of Michigan, has an evolving menu of webinars, research, evaluation, blogs, and proceedings. The new link for AEDI's Michigan site is: <http://aedi.ssw.umich.edu/>. For an at-glance summary of the foundational research on CSAs, check out their infographic: <http://aedi.ssw.umich.edu/sites/default/files/documents/Publications/Infographic-Breaking-the-Pattern-of-Wealth-Inequality.pdf>.
- Center for Social Development at Washington University, St. Louis, is another locus of CSA impact research, especially the Oklahoma SEED project, the only random controlled CSA so far: <https://csd.wustl.edu/Pages/default.aspx>. Search "Children's *Development* Accounts."
- The [webpage](#) for the New England CSA Consortium is also useful. Sponsored by the Federal Reserve of Boston, the page includes research and reports on New England CSAs but also reports on the broader CSA field and outcome metrics for evaluating CSAs.
- The Asset Funders Network CSA page has general info and links to foundational CSA research and a few project profiles: <http://assetfunders.org/educate/csa/>. Their newsletter sometimes includes items on CSAs as well.

Parent/Family/Community Engagement

CSA practitioners and researchers have quickly learned that to build a project is not sufficient to insure that families will actively build on initial seed deposits or take advantage of additional financial or service incentives. Motivation versus acting on motivation is a matter of great interest in many sectors that serve families.

- Here's a [set](#) of documents from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities on using incentives to increase engagement: a literature review, webinar slides, and a field guide: <http://www.buildingbetterprograms.org/2016/12/14/using-incentives-in-human-services-field-guide-literature-review-and-webinar/>. The resources do not target CSAs specifically. They discuss the relative uses of financial and nonfinancial incentives in the larger context of behavioral economics. S
- From American Institutes for Research, a [report](#) on family and community engagement focuses on engagement and school reform but may have useful content since many CSA projects are either school based or collaborating closely with schools: <https://nmefoundation.org/resources/public-understanding-demand/how-family-school-and-community-engagement-can-i>.
- Although based on work in Ghana, this [paper](#) from the Center for Social Development (CSD, Washington University, St. Louis) shows the importance of parental participation for children's financial learning: <https://csd.wustl.edu/Publications>
- From the Collective Impact Forum comes a toolkit on and related [resources](#) on community engagement: <http://collectiveimpactforum.org/blogs/38876/new-toolkit-community-engagement>.

Early Childhood Education

A number of CSA projects begin with accounts for children at birth or no later than kindergarten enrollment. Hence, CSA managers should be aware of opportunities, challenges and measures in the early childhood education arena and how they could or should relate to CSA design and implementation.

- From the child welfare field comes an interesting [discussion](#) of integrating various data sources at the state or municipal level to improve conditions for children and better manage programs and resources: http://www.ecedata.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ECIDS-NC-MN-Webinar_6-6-17_FINAL.pdf. Data sharing and integrating measures have significant potential to design and gauge effects of CSAs.
- Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is a burgeoning area of research in early childhood and K-12 education, and some CSA projects intentionally incorporate SEL into their incentive plans and program measures. For background on SEL, go to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL): www.casel.org.
- NLC also offers [resources](#) from the Early Childhood Success program: <http://www.nlc.org/early-childhood-success>.

College Affordability

One driver of interest in CSAs is accumulation of savings that will reduce the cost burden of postsecondary education. While federal financial aid policies will always be in flux, no doubt having some savings for education is better than none.

- For an example from mainstream media see this Atlantic [article](#) on college affordability: <https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/03/measuring-college-unaffordability/520476/>.
- A white [paper](#) on linking CSAs and College Promise Initiatives from the Institute for Higher Education Policy and Prosperity Now includes some interesting engagement practices, while the primary focus is on coordination with Promise opportunities: http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/ihep_cfed_better_together_report.pdf.
- The financial advisor MorningStar has published another [article](#) on the widening gap between college costs and financial resources: <http://news.morningstar.com/articlenet/article.aspx?id=811594>. Included is a link to a [report](#) (Limited Means, Limited Options) from the Institute for Higher Education Policy that illustrates the relatively small number of institutions actually affordable for low- and middle-income students: http://www.ihep.org/sites/default/files/uploads/docs/pubs/limited_means_limited_options_summary.pdf. Morningstar also publishes an annual review of 529 plans, as well as occasional reports on specific 529 issues.

- Inversant has recorded a [podcast](https://soundcloud.com/user-90635782/what-is-the-real-price-of-college-and-why-is-it-so-hard-to-figure-out?in=user-90635782/sets/college-un-affordability) with Sara Goldrick-Rab on college costs: <https://soundcloud.com/user-90635782/what-is-the-real-price-of-college-and-why-is-it-so-hard-to-figure-out?in=user-90635782/sets/college-un-affordability>. Other Inversant podcasts feature Willie Elliott (AEDI) and Robert Kelchen (Seton Hall University).

Postsecondary Access and Success

Over the past 10 years, policymakers and funders have increasingly focused on low rates of college-going and postsecondary credentialing, particularly among low-income populations and communities of color. Many CSA projects are designed intentionally to address these inequities. Engaging with these initiatives locally may enhance long-term success for CSAs. Key resources on this growing concern include:

- NLC's Education and Expanded Learning program works with cities on a wide range of youth development initiatives that complement CSAs, such as community schools, after-school services and other strategies to promote citywide postsecondary success and career pathway development: <http://www.nlc.org/education-and-expanded-learning>.
- National College Access Network (www.collegeaccess.org) is rooted in a collective action approach and offers information on an extensive variety of grassroots college access and completion strategies and groups, and subject matter expertise on topics such as financial aid, data collection and effective practices for specific populations.
- Researchers, practitioners and advocates are intensely interested in the potential for deliberate pipelines between College Promise projects and CSAs to increase college attendance and completion. Most Promise projects are place-based scholarship programs that make college tuition free for at least one semester or institution: www.freecollegenow.org/.
- Excelencia in Education (www.edexcelencia.org) specializes in Latino Student Success strategies and programs. Some CSA projects serve large numbers of Latino students.
- Complete College America (www.cca.org) works at state level to spread practical solutions to increase significantly the number of Americans with quality career certificates or college degrees, and to close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations.
- Leading funders for college access and completion include: the Helios Education Foundation (www.helios.org); The Kresge Foundation (www.kresge.org); the Lumina Foundation (www.luminafoundation.org); and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (www.gatesfoundation.org). Each has its own approach and theory of change. Explore their websites for indications of emerging trends and models to integrate CSAs with college access and K-12 education initiatives.
- The Federal Child Welfare Information Gateway (<https://www.childwelfare.gov>) offers a number of publications on scholarships and college access with a focus on youth who are homeless or have been involved with the child welfare system:

Policy and Research

With so many CSA models in the field, researchers can choose between intensive evaluation of a single project or seek to understand the effects of CSAs across sites with both common and different elements. to understand what elements of a project are essential to its outcomes. CSAs also operate within an environment of state and local policies that may encourage or discourage savings or other project measures.

- Inversant, with whom Chelsea is affiliated, has carried out a number of [research projects](#) on their CSAs and college access projects: www.Inversant.org .
- The Center for Social Development (CSD, Washington University, St. Louis) produced a [report](#) on CSAs and state-defined asset limits for public benefits: <https://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Documents/PB17-24.pdf> .
- CSD also has a report comparing [account policies](#) across state-wide projects: <https://csd.wustl.edu/Publications> .
- The Brookings Institution has published an interesting discussion of 529s with respect to equity concerns: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-tax-break-for-dream-hoarders-what-to-do-about-529-college-savings-plans/>.
- An MDRC publication offers a policy [analysis](#) and proposals to improve financial aid practices. The recommendations are based on results of several projects MDRC evaluated. Reports on the individual projects cited are linked to this overall set of recommendations: <http://www.mdrc.org/publication/using-innovations-financial-aid-support-college-success> .
- The Consumer Finance Protection Bureau produced a report on effective financial education practices: https://s3.amazonaws.com/files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/201706_cfpb_five-principles-financial-well-being.pdf.
- From Shelterforce comes a [blog](#) by Prosperity Now staffers on emerging state efforts to develop CSAs: <http://rooflines.org/4863/these-states-are-trying-to-level-the-field-for-disadvantaged-students>.
- The subject of a CSD [report](#) is tax savings but content emphasizes behavioral nudges that may help with engagement thinking for your project: <https://csd.wustl.edu/Publications/Pages/default.aspx>

Data on Children

- Individual state data reports on children's status and needs are available from the Child Welfare Information Gateway: <https://www.childwelfare.gov>. Although not city-based, the reports organize data on children by programmatic streams, such as Head Start. Most of these programs flow down to the local (city or county) level and may spark thinking about bringing CSAs into those spheres.

- Annie E. Casey’s annual Kids Count [report](http://www.aecf.org/work/kids-count/) offers annual data on status of children and policies affecting children organized by topics, such as education, rather than by program: <http://www.aecf.org/work/kids-count/>.

Funding and Funder Perspectives

National, regional and local funders have been active in supporting CSAs, not only with dollars but also with advocacy and powers of convening and persuasion. It is well to understand the world-view of a funder, at any level, in order to demonstrate how CSAs can advance their priorities.

- The Asset Funders Network has released survey findings that show the depth and breadth of philanthropic support for CSAs: <https://assetfunders.org/resource/2015-2016-csa-survey-private-funding/>
- The C.S. Mott Foundation has funded CFLeads, a membership-based organization for community foundations, to work with selected members to increase their capacity to invest some of their resources in CSAs. Cities could encourage their local community foundations to contact CFLeads for help in defining local CSA roles: www.cfleads.org
- A [report](http://www.haasjr.org/sites/default/files/resources/Haas_BrightSpots_F2_0.pdf) from the Haas Foundation summarizes successful practices, with the key point being to integrate fundraising throughout an organization: http://www.haasjr.org/sites/default/files/resources/Haas_BrightSpots_F2_0.pdf.
- Brookings has produced a document that combines calculation of the value of investing in children and youth with a “how to” mobilize local support. There is no specific reference to CSAs or savings, but the examples are useful nevertheless for how to make the case and how to generate local support for CSAs: <https://www.brookings.edu/research/investing-in-the-next-generation-a-bottom-up-approach-to-creating-better-outcomes-for-children-and-youth/>.
- The Center for Effective Philanthropy's (CEP) new [report](http://research.cep.org/shifting-winds-foundations-respond-to-new-political-context), “Shifting Winds: Foundations Respond to a New Political Context,” surveyed 162 foundation CEOs of U.S. independent and community foundations on reactions to the shift in presidential administrations and the degree to which they were making changes as a result: <http://research.cep.org/shifting-winds-foundations-respond-to-new-political-context>.
- Exponent Philanthropy’s [survey](http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org/connections/news/news-item/2017/04/25/Pulse-Survey-Results) looked at how political changes may impact philanthropic behavior in the year ahead, in terms of both giving practices and investments: <http://www.exponentphilanthropy.org/connections/news/news-item/2017/04/25/Pulse-Survey-Results>